

Théo Leydenbach

EXISTENTIAL IMPASSE AND ILLNESS. A CLINICAL APPROACH

Abstract

The pathways the self takes to find itself. Working with dreams.

Mostly, almost generally, behind psychosomatic illness there is to be found a relational impasse, either in the very first stage of life, or afterwards, or both. As we will see in the following case, this may apply as well to mental disorder, as the balance could shift from either side with the same realities in the background.

Case in progress: A forty three year old Vietnamese woman, political refugee in France since the age of 18, comes to Europe in the hopes of creating a better life and has difficulties escaping her past: the Vietnamese War, the total absence of her father, the mental instability of her mother, poverty and danger. Difficulties adapting to her new environment, a difficult marriage, a very difficult divorce, and a return to poverty, brings her to illness. Psychosomatic on one side (bulimia and functional disorders), mental instability on the other side (depression and confusion), brings her to a total breakdown. This therapy presents the pathways out of the crisis; it will be represented how psychotherapy could, in this case, build upon her first happy childhood years with her grandmother and how dreams could play, in this therapy, a major roll, not only to give insight to the unconscious but also to help to shape the future.

Theory: Health and illness have to be considered in a fully relational perspective. A relational impasse situation is mostly to be found at the core of a major imbalance in the mind-body unity. Working out relational impasse, together with the work on dreams and the progressive emergence on the imaginative potentialities, appears to be at the core of the healing process as well.

Key Concepts: Relational Impasse, Therapeutic Function of Dreams, Narrative Identity.

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